Transparent parliament

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Sub-target 3 – Transparent parliament

Transparent parliament is one that:

- ensures its work, decisions, procedures and spending are made available to the public, in a timely, understandable and user-friendly manner

This sub-target on transparent parliament is the third element of the Sustainable Development Goal target 16.6 on effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. In this case, it has been adapted to apply to the institution of parliament. The sub-target concerns the openness, transparency and ready accessibility of the parliament in terms of access to the parliamentary building and its venues, as well as the transparency and openness of parliamentary information and communication. Such openness and transparency allow members of the public to engage with parliament in a way that they choose, whether it is to attend the parliament, engage with MPs, or engage with and participate in parliamentary processes and activities. Accessibility must be ensured for all citizens, regardless of disability or special needs.

The first indicator covers the transparency of the full range of the work of the parliament, from the plenary to the work of committees and MPs. It concerns transparency in all aspects of parliamentary work, particularly key aspects such as legislation, budgetary consideration and review. It is about ensuring that there is accessibility for all groups in society, regardless of difference.

The second indicator recognizes that parliament, through media such as its website, and other channels such as print media, television and radio, must communicate information and messages effectively, if it is to be open and transparent. Parliamentary processes are often not well understood by the community, or are misinterpreted, and clear explanations and information that are accessible to all are needed.

Finally, there is an indicator that mainly concerns physical access to the parliamentary building, its venues and MPs, including access for persons with disabilities or special needs, or from disadvantaged groups. Accessibility for persons with disabilities and special needs includes ready and easy-to-use access to the information produced by the parliament. The media has a special role and relationship with the parliament, and its unimpeded access to the parliament is particularly important and is covered in this final indicator.

The sub-target on transparent parliament comprises the following indicators:

- 3.1 Transparency of parliamentary processes
- 3.2 Parliamentary communication
- 3.3 Access to parliament
Indicator 3.1 – Transparency of parliamentary processes

This indicator recognizes that the processes of the parliament need to be open and transparent to the public so that the public is able to understand and engage with the parliament in a way that it chooses, whether it is to be informed about, observe, follow or participate in parliamentary processes. In addition to being transparent, information about the work, decisions and procedures of the legislature needs to be provided in a timely manner, and in forms that can be accessed and understood by the public.

The indicator covers the full range of the work of the parliament, including the plenary, the work of committees, parliament’s international engagement and the work of MPs. It addresses in particular the major areas of the work of the parliament. It therefore examines the transparency of all aspects of the legislative process, which is the primary function of any legislature. It also covers the transparency of the budget process from the initiation of the process to the consideration and approval of the budget by the legislature, as well as ex-post reporting and review.

The assessment of the transparency of parliamentary processes indicator comprises the following dimensions:

- 3.1.1 Transparency of parliamentary work
- 3.1.2 Transparency of the legislative process
- 3.1.3 Budgetary transparency
**Dimension 3.1.1 Transparency of parliamentary work**

Indicator: 3.1 Transparency of parliamentary processes  
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension concerns the transparency of all the work of the parliament. It therefore broadly covers the key principles, policies and practices of the legislature concerning transparency. (Note that dimensions 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 concern more specifically the transparency of crucial aspects of parliamentary roles, namely the legislative process and the process of budgetary consideration. Other dimensions also touch on the transparency of the work and administration of the legislature (2.2.1, 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 6.2.3, 6.2.4 and 6.2.5).

The work of the parliament is central to the lives of its citizens. For citizens to be fully informed about the work, decisions and activities of all aspects of the legislature, from the plenary and committees to international parliamentary relationships and the work of MPs, it is essential for the parliament to have clearly defined policies and practices for the transparency of all aspects of its work. In addition to transparency, information needs to be available in accessible and usable forms to all groups in the community, including minority or disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities.

As the parliament and its processes and practices are not always readily understood within the community, parliament also needs to provide explanations of parliamentary processes so that citizens can gain an understanding of how parliament works and, consequently, better understand how to use and put into context the detailed information that is made available.

It can be a resource-intensive task to make available detailed information about the work of the parliament. Parliament needs to ensure that it has sufficient and capable staff and other resources to assume its transparency responsibilities.

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<tr>
<th>On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of transparency of parliamentary work would encompass the following:</th>
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<tr>
<td>There are rules of the legislature that provide a clear framework requiring transparency of all aspects of the work of the legislature, such as the plenary, committees, international parliamentary cooperation, and the benefits and allowances of MPs. The framework includes statements concerning the principles and policies of the legislature to ensure transparency, and a clear indication of how the policies will be translated into practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information on all aspects of the work of the parliament is made available in a timely manner and can be widely accessed. Such information covers the work of the legislature and is packaged in a way that combines related areas of information to make it more easily available to the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about the work of the parliament is readily accessible and usable by the general community. The accessibility and usability of information includes consideration of the different needs of certain groups in the community, for example, minority or disadvantaged groups, and persons with disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explanatory material is made available by the parliament to explain in detail the role of parliament, and various processes, procedures and activities of the legislature, its committees and its MPs, to enable the community to better understand the legislative process.</td>
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Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
The parliament has adequate and capable human resources to fulfil its transparency responsibilities.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:
- Specific provisions of the rules of the legislature that relate to the transparency of all aspects of parliamentary work
- Information available or accessible from the parliamentary website concerning all aspects of parliamentary work
- Statistics on the number of visits to the parliamentary website to access information on the work of the parliament
- Any commentary on the accessibility or usability of the information concerning the work of the parliament that is available on the website.

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Framework for transparency

There are rules of the legislature that provide a clear framework requiring the transparency of all aspects of the work of the legislature, such as the plenary, committees, international parliamentary cooperation, and the benefits and allowances of MPs. The framework includes statements concerning the principles and policies of the legislature to ensure transparency, and a clear indication of how the policies are translated into practice.

Assessment criterion No. 2: Availability of information

Information on all aspects of the work of the parliament is made available in a timely manner and can be widely accessed. Such information covers the work of the legislature and is packaged in a way that combines related areas of information to make it more easily available to the community.
Assessment criterion No. 3: Accessibility and usability of information

Information about the work of the parliament is readily accessible and usable by the general community. The accessibility and usability of information includes consideration of the different needs of certain groups in the community, for example, minority groups, groups without access to the internet, disadvantaged groups, and persons with disabilities.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Explanation of parliamentary processes

Explanatory material is made available by the parliament to explain in detail the role, various processes, procedures and activities of the legislature, its committees and its MPs, to enable the public to gain an understanding of parliamentary processes so that they can make full use of the detailed information provided by the parliament.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 5: Resources

The parliament has adequate and capable resources to fulfil its transparency responsibilities, including the periodic evaluation of parliamentary transparency and the introduction of new mechanisms and practices to further improve transparency.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change
Dimension 3.1.2 Transparency of the legislative process

Indicator: 3.1 Transparency of parliamentary processes
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension addresses the issue of the transparency of the entire cycle of the legislative process, from the introduction of a piece of legislation to the adoption of a law by parliament. It also considers the scope, channels, forms and timing of the dissemination of legislative information to the public.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of the transparency of the legislative process would encompass the following:

Parliament makes available to the public all relevant information and documents considered and generated throughout the legislative process. This includes the full text and status of a proposal for a new law, or a proposal to change an existing law that is presented for debate before parliament, as well as the texts of all amendments, the parliamentary agenda and schedule, and all other background information created for or by parliament that forms part of the record on a given piece of legislation.

Information is made available on the parliamentary website in a timely manner (in real time or as quickly as it is available internally), and in a format that can easily be searched for, downloaded and reused.

All documents related to a specific piece of legislation (amendments to the law, records and minutes of plenary and committee discussions and votes, and other reports and background information) are structured and presented in a way that ensure that citizens can easily follow and understand the entire legislative process.

Links are also provided to the text and final status of proposed and enacted legislation from previous years which relate to proposed pieces of legislation.

Parliament constantly monitors the new trends and experiences of other parliaments and periodically introduces innovations and improves its practices.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the rules of procedures that regulate transparency of legislative process
- Other rules, procedures and parliamentary and committee acts that regulate specific parliamentary obligations regarding legislative information

1 The term ‘proposal for a new law’, in this case, refers to a bill, a draft law, ‘law proposition’ or ‘law project’ (depending on the parliamentary system) that is introduced, tabled or submitted by any stakeholder with a legal right to legislative initiative (such as the executive, an MP, group of MPs, or any other legitimate stakeholder in the given parliament).
• Links to website pages with available information on the legislative process
• Parliamentary records with data such as the number of visits to legislation-related pages and the number of downloads

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Public availability of information on bills and laws**

Every bill (proposals for a law) and enacted law are made publicly available. This includes the full text and status of a proposal for a new law, or a proposal to change an existing law that is presented for debate before parliament.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

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**Assessment criterion No. 2: Public availability of information generated throughout the legislative procedure**

All information generated throughout the legislative procedure is made publicly available, including the texts of all amendments, the parliamentary agenda and schedule, records of plenary and committee discussions and votes, and all other reports and background information created for or by parliament that form a part of the record on a given piece of legislation, including public and expert opinions submitted to or prepared for parliament.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

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**Assessment criterion No. 3: Usability of information provided on the parliamentary website**

Information related to the legislative process is made available on the parliamentary website in a timely manner (in real time or as quickly as it is available internally), and in a format that can easily be searched for, downloaded and reused.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

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**Assessment criterion No. 4: User friendliness of legislation tracking**
All documents related to a specific piece of legislation (amendments to the law, records and minutes of plenary and committee discussions and votes, and other reports and background information) are structured and presented in a way that citizens can easily follow and understand the entire legislative procedure. Links are also provided to the text and final status of proposed and enacted legislation from previous years which relate to a proposed piece of legislation.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change
Sub-target 3 – Transparent parliament

Dimension 3.1.3 Budgetary transparency

Indicator: 3.1 Transparency of parliamentary processes
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension concerns the transparency of the complete process of budgetary development, adoption and expenditure. This includes transparency and clarity regarding the role of parliament in the budget process (see indicator 1.8 Budget for a full description of the process of budgetary consideration by parliament, and dimension 6.2.4 on public participation in the budget cycle) and also transparency with respect to the parliament’s own budget (see dimensions 1.1.3 and 2.2.1).

The national annual budget has a significant impact on the lives of the nation’s citizens. For parliament, budget consideration is one of the most significant tasks that it undertakes. For these reasons, the transparency of all aspects of the budgetary process is vital for the community’s and parliament’s knowledge and scrutiny of the nation’s budget.

As the executive is usually responsible for developing and delivering the budget, it is also responsible, to a large extent, for ensuring transparency. Parliament can ensure that there is transparency by requiring, in legislation or other similar provisions, the executive to be transparent, and by monitoring its implementation of transparency, particularly as it facilitates parliament’s own consideration and ex-post review of the budget. Parliament has a responsibility to ensure that its own process of consideration and ex-post review of the budget, both in the plenary and committees, is transparent.

Transparency of the national budget encompasses transparency of the parliament’s own budget, which should be subject to the same level of transparency and scrutiny as the national budget (see also dimensions 2.2.1 Parliamentary expenditures and 2.2.4 Reporting on parliamentary work).

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of budgetary transparency would encompass the following:

- There is a legal framework (constitutional, legislative or other provisions) for the transparency of the entire process of the development, consideration, approval and expenditure of the annual national budget.
- Information is made available, in a timely manner, on all stages of the budget as it undergoes development, consideration and approval by the legislature, and on the reporting of expenditure outcomes and ex-post evaluation.
- The information about the budget is readily accessible and usable by the general community and the parliament. The accessibility and usability of information includes consideration of the different needs of certain groups in the community, for example, minority or disadvantaged groups, and persons with disabilities.
- Explanatory material is made available by the parliament to explain the parliamentary process for budgetary consideration, approval and ex-post review, and how the parliamentary processes relate to the detailed information provided about the budget.

Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
Information about all aspects of the parliament’s budget is required by legislation or rules of the legislature, and comprehensive information on all aspects of the parliament’s budget is readily available and accessible from the parliament’s website.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific provisions of the constitution, legislation or rules of the legislature that relate to the transparency of all aspects of the annual national budget and the parliamentary budget
- Information available or accessible concerning all aspects of the national budget, the parliamentary budget and the process for parliamentary consideration of the budget
- Statistics on the number of visits to websites with information on the national budget and the parliamentary budget
- Any commentary on the accessibility or usability of the information that is available on these websites

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework for budgetary transparency**

There is evidence of a legal framework (constitutional, legislative or other provisions) for the transparency of the entire process of the development, consideration, approval and expenditure of the annual national budget.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Availability of information**

Information is made available, in a timely manner, on all stages of the budget as it undergoes development, consideration and approval by the legislature, and on the reporting of expenditure outcomes and ex-post evaluation.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Accessibility and usability of information**

Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
The information on the budget is readily accessible and usable by the general community and the parliament. The accessibility and usability of information includes consideration of the different needs of certain groups in the community, for example, minority or disadvantaged groups, and persons with disabilities.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Explanation of parliamentary processes**

Explanatory material is made available by the parliament to explain the parliamentary process for budgetary consideration, approval and ex-post review, and how the parliamentary processes relate to the detailed information provided about the budget.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 5: Parliamentary budget**

Information about all aspects of the parliament's budget is required by legislation or rules of the legislature, and comprehensive information on all aspects of the parliament’s budget is readily available and accessible from the parliament’s website.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**
Indicator 3.2 – Parliamentary communication

This indicator outlines the importance of communication between the parliament as an institution and the public, and the use of different channels to reach all public groups.

Only with an informed citizenry can there be effective involvement by citizens in parliamentary work. It is therefore the duty of parliament to ensure that people understand parliamentary roles and processes, and to provide information about its work.

Almost all parliaments across the world use the official parliamentary website as a key way of informing people about parliamentary activities. The parliamentary website should provide timely, accurate and comprehensive information about the legislature and its work, especially law-making and oversight. The information provided should be organized and presented in a way that is easy for all individuals, regardless of language, disability or special needs, to find, understand and use. The website should provide interactive content to enable two-way communication with the public.

Parliament must also use various other channels to inform and communicate with people, and make sure that information is accessible to rural areas, groups without access to the internet and vulnerable groups.

The assessment of parliamentary communication comprises the following dimensions:

- 3.2.1 Parliamentary website
- 3.2.2 Other channels for informing the public
Dimension 3.2.1 Parliamentary website

Indicator: 3.2 Parliamentary communication
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension covers the parliamentary websites and their main elements as a valuable means of communication with citizens, public outreach and engagement. It encompasses the key information that a parliament’s official site should include, as well as the format in which information is available and is easy to use.

Please see also indicators 1.3 Parliamentary procedures, 1.4 Parliamentary organization, 1.5 Administrative capacity, 1.6 Law-making, 1.7 Oversight, 1.8 Budget, 3.1 Transparency of parliamentary processes, 3.3 Access to parliament and 6.2 Participation in parliamentary process.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of parliamentary websites would encompass the following:

The parliamentary website provides comprehensive, timely and accurate information about the parliament, its role, legal responsibilities, composition and organization, as well as information on its daily business executing its constitutional functions.

This includes the documentation and media produced by the plenary and non-plenary bodies, as well as information on all parliamentary activities, including law-making, oversight and budget.

The parliamentary website meets the needs of the intended audiences, is easy to use and understand, and is accessible to all and inclusive of different sectors of society. The content is available in various languages, especially in countries with two or more official languages or languages that are widely used by their citizens.

Parliamentary information and data are available in open and machine-readable formats that can be used/reused.

The parliamentary website offers live streams of all public hearings, including plenary sessions and committee hearings.

The parliament fosters dialogue with the public through interactive content on its website, and tools and mechanisms for contacting MPs, committees and parliament officials.

The parliament provides active leadership with regard to the website, as well as adequate resources and a strong commitment to the accuracy and quality of information. There is evidence of good management of the documentation, information and media available on the website.

Assessment

2 Committees and commissions.
3 See dimension 3.3.2 Accessibility standards, and dimension 5.2.3 Multilingual service delivery.
4 See dimension 1.5.4 Innovation and digital technologies.
The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:
- Links to various sections of the parliamentary website
- Dedicated budget and staff for the website
- Systems security infrastructure and reports
- Strategic vision and planning
- ICT reports on the parliamentary website
- Evidence of periodic evaluation of the website

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Website content**

The parliamentary website provides comprehensive information about parliament’s role, functions and organization, including (but not limited to): the agenda, calendars and records of plenary/committee meetings; the profiles of MPs and their activities and votes; internal rules, administrative procedures and workflows; information on international parliamentary activities; and all other relevant documentation generated in parliamentary processes. The parliamentary website offers live streams of all public proceedings, including plenary sessions and committee hearings.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Usability and inclusivity**

Information on the parliamentary website is published in a timely way and is accurate, well-organized and easy to find. The parliamentary website is understandable and easy to operate by both beginner and expert users. Information on the website is written using plain language, making it easy to read and understand. Accessibility standards are implemented to ensure that the website can be used by persons with disabilities. In countries with two or more official languages or languages used by large percentages of citizens, the website is either fully available in these languages, or at least the most relevant information is available.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Format of information available on the website**
Parliamentary information and data are available in open and machine-readable formats that can be used/reused or, at least, in a format that can be easily searched for, copied and downloaded.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Communication between parliament and the public**

The website offers interactive content that promotes and enables two-way communication with the public. It has tools and mechanisms that facilitate public participation in parliamentary processes, including submitting comments and questions. The website also provides options for and recommended ways of contacting MPs, committees and parliament officials, as well as contact details. Opportunities for guided visits, virtual visits and other events are presented on the website, with guidance on how to access the parliamentary building.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 5: Website management**

The website has the approval and support of the highest parliamentary and administrative authorities, adequate long-term funding, trained staff and secure technical infrastructure. The needs and goals of the website are defined in writing and a periodic evaluation of the website is conducted.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Recommendations for change**

**Sources and further reading**
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), “Centre for Innovation in Parliament”
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Guidelines for Parliamentary Websites* (Geneva: IPU, 2009)
• Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *World e-Parliament Report 2018* (France: IPU, 2018)
• Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *World e-Parliament Report 2020* (IPU, 2021)
• United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Technological Options for Capturing and Reporting Parliamentary Proceedings* (UN and IPU, 2014)
**Dimension 3.2.2 Other channels for informing the public**

Indicator: 3.2 Parliamentary communication  
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension outlines the provisions establishing that parliament uses various channels and forms for informing different groups of the public, including print media, radio and television broadcasters, internet and social media providers, mobile device technology platforms, and that it has direct contact with individual citizens. It is an inherent interest and obligation of parliament, as a representative political institution, to make its activities public and to inform all groups in society about its activities using all available channels. Nevertheless, various surveys show that, in the majority of countries, citizens have a very limited understanding of parliamentary work, which may result in low trust in the institution.

Despite the growing use of digital technologies, in the majority of countries, traditional mass media (particularly broadcast media) is still the primary channel of communication. Therefore, many parliaments use television and radio channels to publicize their work. However, due to the increased complexity and diversification of information sources, many parliaments are employing new technologies, including the internet and social media, in their communication schemes.

Many parliaments around the world broadcast or permit the broadcasting of their proceedings by means of public or private media. Some countries allow only public (state) broadcasters to record and broadcast their sessions, while others are open to private media as well. Many countries have a dedicated television channel for broadcasting and recording their proceedings. While these dedicated channels may only interest a minority of the population, they fit into a more general picture of increasing fragmentation of media audiences. What is important, however, is that such channels should be accessible to the widest population. 

Along with radio and television broadcasting, parliamentary information is also conveyed by bulletins, newspapers, journals and other publications that are designed to provide detailed coverage of parliamentary proceedings. In order to facilitate public understanding of complex parliamentary information, many parliaments produce bulletins with more concise official information.

Whatever channels are used, parliaments need to make sure that all groups of the public, including disadvantaged groups, groups without access to the internet, children and young people, are reached. This process requires adequate resources, tools and techniques. Some parliaments have established specialized media or information units to facilitate the provision of information to the public.

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Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
**Sub-target 3 – Transparent parliament**

broadcasting, print media, the internet, written publications and leaflets) and provide all groups of society with access to parliamentary proceedings.

Parliament produces various information materials (bulletins, leaflets) facilitating public access to and understanding of parliamentary work and its products.

Parliament is equipped with adequate material and human resources to ensure effective communication and access of all groups of the public to parliamentary information.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of laws that regulate the access of the media to parliamentary proceedings
- Specific articles of the rules of procedures that regulate procedures for the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings
- Strategies, procedures, reports or other documents describing parliamentary communication
- Staff structure, and financial and other documents describing parliamentary resources dedicated to communication

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework on media accessibility to parliamentary proceedings**

There is evidence of legal provisions that regulate media accessibility to parliamentary proceedings. These provisions enable the media to record and/or broadcast parliamentary proceedings, with possible exceptions that are limited and clearly defined.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Strategies and practices for informing different groups of the public about parliament’s work**

There is evidence of a systematic process of informing different groups of society about parliamentary work, which embraces the needs of different audiences and uses diverse channels and means of communication.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:
**Assessment criterion No. 3: Resources**

There is evidence that parliament is equipped with adequate material and human resources to ensure effective communication and access to parliamentary information for all groups of the public.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**
Indicator 3.3 – Access to parliament

This indicator covers issues concerning physical access to parliamentary venues and events for the public and the media. It does not address the transparency of information about parliament (which is covered in other indicators (3.1 and 3.2) or public participation in the proceedings and processes of parliament (which is covered in indicators 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). However, it does include accessibility issues for persons with disabilities or specific requirements other than physical issues, which may limit their access to the parliament building and parliamentary information.

If parliament is to be regarded as being ‘open’ to the public and the media, the issue of physical accessibility is important. In times such as these, where there are concerns about security and, more recently, public health issues such as pandemics, all parliaments need to carefully balance accessibility and openness with other legitimate concerns, such as security and public health and safety.

This indicator covers the openness to the public of parliamentary venues (the building, chamber(s) and committee meeting rooms), as well as of events organized inside or outside the parliament. It also concerns accessibility issues for members of the community with specific requirements, including persons with disabilities. The media has a special place in democratic societies insofar as it provides a focus on the reporting of the activities of the legislature, thus ensuring the transparency and accountability of the legislature. Parliament needs to guarantee free and unfettered access to the media.

The assessment of the access to parliament indicator comprises the following dimensions:

- 3.3.1 Openness of parliamentary venues and events to citizens
- 3.3.2 Accessibility standards
- 3.3.3 Media access to parliament
**Dimension 3.3.1 Openness of parliamentary venues and events to citizens**

Indicator: 3.3 Access to parliament  
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

While the transparency and openness of parliamentary processes and information is of great significance, the physical accessibility of a parliament and parliamentary events to its citizenry is of both symbolic and practical importance in shaping how citizens view the ‘openness’ of parliament. The accessibility of the parliament building and its venues for parliamentary activities plays a vital role in attracting the public and media to the parliament, which is not the case for other means of transparency, such as the availability of information about the legislature.

There are a number of aspects concerning the openness of the parliament and its venues to the public. Firstly, there is the question of the general accessibility of the parliament building to the public. Access for visitors can be facilitated by the provision of services such as a visitor centre and/or visitor services staff to assist, encourage and inform visitors. Special events such as open days or other special occasions, organized inside or outside parliament, to which the public are invited, can be used to attract citizens to the parliament building and give them a sense of ownership of and connection with ‘their’ building.

Many parliaments also provide virtual access to parliamentary buildings and events, through virtual tours or other means and tools, which can attract more people and foster a better understanding of the parliament.

Particular arrangements need to be made for accessibility to sessions of the plenary, public meetings of committees and other public activities in which the parliament is involved. It is reasonable for parliaments, when developing arrangements for accessibility, to be conscious of the security or public health and safety concerns that arise when ensuring ready accessibility to the parliament and parliamentarians. There is often a delicate balance between accessibility and public safety to be made by parliaments. In achieving this balance, parliaments have to ensure that their citizens have a clear understanding that parliament is an open institution with restrictions imposed only as needed to guarantee security and public safety. Parliaments may also require citizens to make a request to attend the parliament, and parliaments should make clearly available the instructions and contacts for the submission of such requests.

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**On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of openness of parliamentary venues and events to citizens would encompass the following:**

The laws and rules of procedure of the legislature provide for and encourage the country’s citizens to have open access to the parliament building, parliamentary venues and events where the parliament’s proceedings and processes are undertaken. Particular emphasis is placed on the rules allowing free access to the parliamentary chamber(s) for sessions of the plenary, to the public hearings of committees and other public activities of the legislature.

Restrictions on accessibility to the parliamentary building and its meeting and other venues, which are imposed by laws or the rules of procedure of the legislature, are limited to reasonable issues of security and public health and safety. The parliament ensures a careful balance, in its rules, between openness and accessibility, and only imposes reasonable restrictions.
The practices of the legislature support access for citizens to the parliament building and the parliamentary venues. Access to the parliament building is encouraged by approaches such as the operation of a visitor centre and a visitor service, and the organization of open days and special event days.

Arrangements for access to meeting venues for sessions of the plenary and public meetings of committees ensure ready accessibility for the public.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:
- Provisions of legislation and rules of procedures of the parliament which relate to arrangements for the public to have access to the parliament building and its public meeting venues
- Statistics about visitor numbers to the building, the chamber(s) and public meetings of committees
- Statistics about visitor numbers for open days and other special events
- Reports of visitor services units in the legislature
- Existence of virtual representations and tours of the parliament buildings

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework for the openness of the parliament building and its venues

The laws and rules of procedure of the legislature provide for and encourage open access for the country’s citizens to the parliament building and the parliamentary venues where the parliament’s proceedings and processes, such as the sessions of the plenary and public meetings of committees and other public parliamentary activities, are undertaken.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2 Restrictions on accessibility

Restrictions on access to the parliamentary building and its meeting and other venues that are imposed by laws or the rules of procedure of the legislature are limited only to stipulated reasonable issues of security and public health and safety. Citizens are clearly informed of these restrictions.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:
Assessment criterion No. 3: Practices of the legislature regarding physical accessibility

The practices of the legislature support access for citizens to the parliament building and the parliamentary venues. Access to the parliament building is encouraged by approaches such as the operation of a visitor centre and a visitor service, the organization of open days and special event days, and the provision of virtual representations and tours of the parliament buildings.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Information on access to parliament

Arrangements for access to meeting venues for sessions of the plenary and public meetings of committees ensure ready accessibility for the public. There is proactive communication with the public about access to parliament, and contacts and instructions for the public to access the building, its venues and events are readily available.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Sources and further reading

**Dimension 3.3.2 Accessibility standards**

Indicator: 3.3 Access to parliament  
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

It is vital that parliament provides equal access to all members of the community. Parliament needs to be accessible to persons with disabilities, from disadvantaged groups or with other special needs that create barriers to access for the general public. Parliament needs to consider accessibility to the parliament building, parliamentary processes and proceedings and parliamentary information. Parliament has to make a special effort to ensure that persons with particular needs have the same level of access as that of the general community. This requires setting standards for accessibility and applying them across the board.

The physical structure of a building can create barriers for persons with disabilities (for example, not having wheelchair access, or access for persons with a visual impairment). These barriers may include difficulties in accessing the parliamentary chamber(s) and committee meeting rooms. Particular challenges exist for parliaments with older or heritage buildings, as they may need to be retrofitted to meet accessibility standards.

In addition to physical access to the building, persons with disabilities may experience other impediments to access. There may be impediments to access to parliamentary information in the form in which it is made available to the majority of the community. Therefore, when providing access to its information, parliament needs to ensure that the information is readily accessible to persons with disabilities such as vision or hearing impairment. If the parliament has a visitor centre, or holds open days or other special events, these also should be equally accessible to people with disabilities.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of accessibility standards would encompass the following:

There is evidence of the existence of a legislative framework with provisions that require parliament to ensure equal access to the parliament building, its processes and proceedings and to its information for all citizens regardless of disability or other special needs.

In practice, the application of the legislative framework ensures that all citizens have equal access to the legislature and its processes, procedures and information, regardless of disability or special needs.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific provisions of legislation and the rules of procedures of the parliament relating to disabled access to the parliament building, its proceedings, processes and information
- Statistics about disabled access to the parliamentary building and venues and information

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.
Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework for accessibility standards

There is evidence of the existence of a legislative framework with provisions that require parliament to ensure equal physical and online access to the parliament building, its processes and proceedings and its information for all citizens regardless of disability or other special needs. The legislative framework is supported by the rules of procedure of the legislature.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Practices of the legislature regarding access to the building

In practice, the legislature applies its accessibility standards to ensure equal physical access to the building and the parliament’s processes and procedures for all citizens, regardless of disability or special needs.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 3: Practices of the legislature regarding access to information

In practice, the legislature applies its accessibility standards to ensure equal physical and online access to its information for all citizens, regardless of disability or special needs.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Sources and further reading

Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7

26
• National Democratic Institute (NDI), *Towards the Development of International Standards for Democratic Legislatures* (NDI, 2007)
Dimension 3.3.3 Media access to parliament

Indicator: 3.3 Access to parliament
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

There is a complex relationship between the media and parliament and its MPs. On the one hand, MPs recognize the valuable role played by the media in informing citizens about the work of the parliament and, consequently, they wish to cultivate their relationships with the media. On the other hand, MPs often consider that the media focuses largely on the negative aspects of parliament (conflict between personalities and parties and the self-interest of MPs), which results in MPs seeking to avoid the media. There should be an understanding that MPs are public figures and, as such, are subject to greater scrutiny (and criticism) than others. Furthermore, the media can see parliament as unnecessarily restricting its access and freedom to fully report on the events of the legislature.

Nevertheless, despite the mutual distrust that can characterize this relationship, both the media and parliament can gain a great deal by working together cooperatively. The media plays an essential role in democratic societies by bringing the parliament and its work to the attention of the public, and in ensuring the accountability of the executive and parliament. To be able to carry out its work effectively, the media needs to have ready access to the parliament and the freedom to be able to report on events without fear of recrimination. For parliament, this means that a number of measures need to be taken to ensure free and open access and reporting for the media.

Parliament, through its legislative capacity, needs to provide the right regulatory framework in which the media can work, that is, to ensure there is diversity of media ownership and viewpoints, and there are no undue restrictions on the freedom of expression for the media (for example, unduly strong defamation laws or laws for contempt of parliament).

The rules of the legislature should provide the media with ready access to the parliament building and to the venues in which the public proceedings of the legislature are conducted. Such access should permit the media to freely report on the activities of the legislature. In this regard, it is noted that the work of parliamentary committees often portrays a more balanced and less adversarial perspective on the work of parliament. For these reasons, media access to and reporting on the work of committees should be encouraged. Many legislatures issue credentials to the media with access to the parliament. Credentialing should only be for the purpose of knowing who has access, or for exercising some overall control over the number of media outlets with access. It should not be used to limit the diversity of the media that is able to report on parliament nor to exercise political control over the media that has access to the parliament. The media also needs to have reasonable space (to work and conduct interviews) and infrastructure support (for example, Wi-Fi) to carry out its work.

The connection of parliament with the media can be facilitated by parliament having a media relations unit or staff to liaise with the media about the work of parliament and inform it of parliamentary activities, particularly the work of committees, which may be less visible. Such units and staff should work in a non-partisan way to support the legislature.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of media access to parliament would encompass the following:
There is a legal framework (constitution, legislation) for the regulation of the media in the country. The regulatory framework ensures wide ownership and multiple sources of news and reporting, and freedom of expression, including protection for media sources and strict limits on the use of defamation laws and contempt of parliament provisions to curb free expression.

The rules of procedure of the legislature guarantee openness and accessibility of the parliament building and the venues where the parliament conducts its public proceedings.

Rules of the legislature for the credentialing of the media to have access to and report on the legislature do not limit the diversity of the media covering parliament, and are not exercised for political control.

Restrictions imposed by the rules of the legislature on media access to parliament are only to prevent serious interference with or disruption of parliamentary proceedings or the work of MPs. There are no unwarranted obstacles preventing the media from observing the plenary in session or the public meetings of committees.

The practice of the legislature is for diverse media to have ready access to the parliament building and its public meeting venues, and to be able to report on parliament freely. The parliament also should ensure that the media is given space and infrastructure support to enable it to do its work.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific provisions of legislation and rules of procedures of the parliament relating to the legislature’s relationship with the media
- Statistics on accreditation and access of media representatives

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Regulatory framework for the media**

There is a legal framework (constitution, legislation) for the regulation of the media in the country. The regulatory framework ensures wide ownership and multiple sources of news and reporting, and freedom of expression, including protection for media sources and strict limits on the use of defamation laws and contempt of parliament provisions to curb free expression.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Framework of the legislature**
The rules of procedure of the legislature guarantee the openness and accessibility for the media of the parliament building and the venues where the parliament conducts its public proceedings, including sessions of the plenary and public meetings of committees.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Credentialing of the media**

Rules of the legislature for the credentialing of media to have access to and report on the legislature do not limit the diversity of the media covering parliament, and are not exercised for political control.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Restrictions on access**

Restrictions imposed by the rules of the legislature on media access to parliament are only to prevent serious interference with or disruption of parliamentary proceedings or the work of MPs. There are no unwarranted obstacles preventing the media from observing the plenary in session or the public meetings of committees.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 5: Practice of the legislature**

The practice of the legislature is for diverse media to have ready access to the parliament building and its public meeting venues and to be able to report on parliament freely and equally, and for no particular media outlet to be favoured. The media also is given work space and infrastructure support by the parliament to enable it to carry out its work.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:
Recommendations for change

Sources and further reading